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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effectiveness of a model of student teacher supervision that gives full responsibility for supervising student teachers to qualified classroom teachers. The model provides increased status for cooperating teachers while maintaining close ties with the university through student teacher coordinators. In this model, cooperating teachers are appointed as adjunct faculty at the university and award the final grade for student teaching. A survey instrument examined respondents' perspectives regarding the qualifications of university faculty and cooperating teachers to assess and evaluate student teacher performance. Results indicated that more cooperating teachers preferred the current model than the new model, believing that university supervisors were more qualified to evaluate and grade student teachers. University supervisors preferred the current model even more than did the cooperating teachers, believing they were more qualified to evaluate and grade student teachers. Overall, participants felt that the best model would combine the work of the university supervisor and cooperating teacher, with each working cooperatively to ensure the best development of the student teacher. Both groups believed that the best role for the classroom teacher was that of mentor, with evaluation done through mutual discussion. (SM)

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A New Model of Student Teacher Supervision: Perceptions of Supervising Teachers

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Introduction

The literature in teacher education has consistently found that the supervising or cooperating teacher is the most important figure in the student teaching experience (Bunting, 1988; Richardson-Koehler, 1988). Indeed, some researchers suggest that the university supervisor is not necessary (Monson & Bebb, 1970). Numerous studies conclude that the cooperating teacher is most qualified to evaluate the student teacher.

Although the importance of the supervising teacher is well documented, little has come into the literature about being a supervising teacher. The available research that has been done focuses mainly on the knowledge and characteristics supervising teachers need to have in order to fulfill their role. One of the few studies examining the supervising teacher's role (Slick, 1997), concluded that better understand of the supervising teacher's perceptions, expectations, and obligations are vital to improving the student teaching experience.

As the student teaching experience has come under closer scrutiny and the relationship of universities and public schools has been examined and begun evolving, variations on the traditional method of student teacher supervision have been implemented. In these new supervisory structures, the supervising teacher has assumed new importance in terms of assessing and evaluating student teachers. Variations of models giving the supervising teacher new roles have been examined and found positives. Generally, supervising teachers who have more responsibility experience professional growth, increase self-confidence, and gain status among colleagues (Wilson, 1995).

Contemporary thought on preparing new teachers suggests new roles for public school and teacher preparation institutions (Goodlad, 1990). Universities are urged to collaborate with public schools in preparing new teachers in new partnerships which allow expert classroom teachers to have more impact in training future teachers while allowing university faculty to work more cooperatively with the schools. In the last decade, a number of teacher training institutions have sought to develop new partnerships that improve the supervision of student teachers and enhance teacher training.

For the second time, the teacher education unit at Kennesaw State University is utilizing a model of student teacher supervision which gives full responsibility for supervision of student teachers to qualified classroom teachers. This model for student teacher supervision provides an increase in status for cooperating teachers while maintaining close ties with the university through Student Teacher Coordinators who maintain contact with the student teacher and cooperating teacher through email, two workshops, telephone, etc. In this new model, these cooperating teachers are appointed as adjunct faculty at the university and award the final grade for student teaching.

Procedures:

A survey instrument was constructed to gather perspectives of qualifications of university faculty and school cooperating teachers to assess and evaluate student teacher performance.

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Cooperating teachers and university faculty completed a survey containing five items regarding the new model of student teacher supervision, four controlled choices and one open-ended one. Fifty-eight of 114 cooperating teachers, and sixteen of 18 university faculty completed and returned the survey instruments.

Analysis:

The survey contained four controlled choice questions. One pair of questions examined respondents' preference of the two student teaching models, the traditional triad which involves supervision by the university supervisor and collaborating teacher, and the new one which involves no observations by the university supervisor but more seminars back on campus or at the field site instead. An average score was obtained to be compared within each pair of questions and between the two sets of questions.

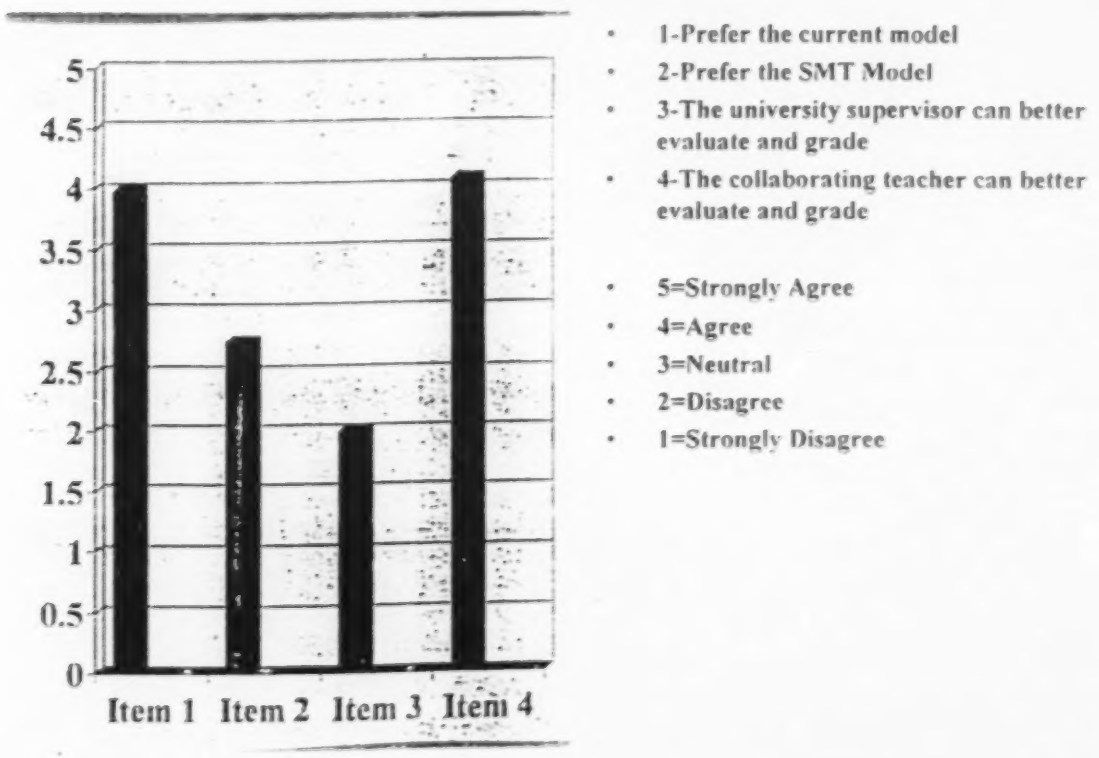
Comments were grouped by topic and reviewed for patterns of view.

Results:

Collaborating Teacher Perceptions

On a 1-5 scale, more collaborating teachers indicated that had preferred the current model (X = 3.91 over X = 3.17). Results on the secondary pair of questions can explain why more teachers like the current model. Question 4, "University supervisor can better evaluate and grade the student teacher", received a mean score of 3.95. The mean score for "Collaborating teachers can better evaluate and grade the student teacher" was 2.33. Written comments further explained that many teachers would not feel comfortable with sole responsibility for evaluating and grading the student teacher. Figure 1 demonstrates the mean scours on the 4 items.

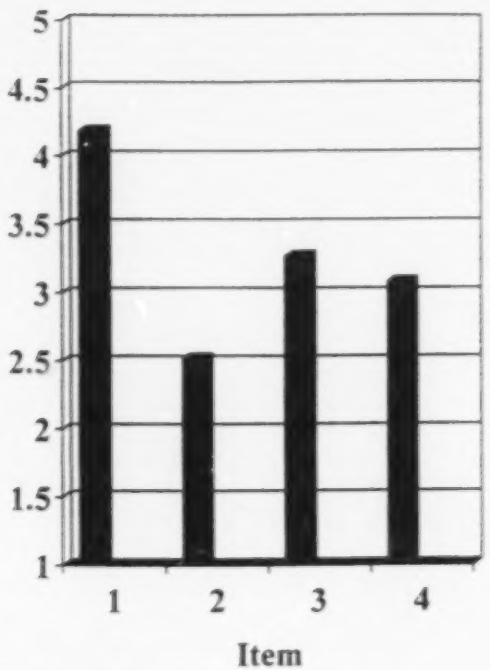
Figure 1 **Collaborating Teacher Survey Responses-Spring 2000**



University Supervisor Perceptions

University supervisors' responses indicated that they preferred the current model more than did the collaborating teachers. "Favor the current model" received a mean of 4.33, compared to a mean of 2.57 for "Favor the new model." They also believed that they were more qualified to evaluate and grade the student teacher. Figure 2 demonstrates these comparisons.

Figure 2 **University Supervisor Survey Responses-Spring 2000**



- **1-I prefer the student teaching model which involves supervision by the KSU University supervisor and the collaborating teacher.**
- **2-I prefer the supervising master teacher student teaching model which involves no observations by the university supervisor but more seminars on campus or at the school site instead.**
- **3-I believe I can better evaluate and grade a student teacher than can the classroom teacher.**
- **4-I believe the classroom teacher can better evaluate and grade a student teacher than can I.**
- **5=Strongly Agree; 4=Agree; 3=Neutral; 2=Disagree; 1=Strongly Disagree**

Comments

Over one-fifth of traditional supervising teachers and supervising master teachers commented on the issues of supervising teacher and university supervisor roles and relationships. Overwhelmingly, they expressed the view that the best model combines the work of the university supervisor and supervising teacher, with each working cooperatively to ensure the best development of the student teacher.

Both regular supervising teachers and supervising master teachers commented on wanting the university supervisor to deliver any "bad news." Both groups expressed views that the better role for classroom teachers is that of mentor, with evaluation being done through mutual discussion. Additional comments centered on the need for the point of view of both the supervising teacher and university supervisor. Statements indicated that respondents felt university faculty are more knowledgeable on theory, while classroom teachers are better able to teach about the reality of teaching.

Conclusions:

University supervisors' and cooperating teachers' perspectives on qualifications for evaluation and grading student teachers have implications for the new model of student teacher

supervision being piloted. Clearly, much work remains to be done if the new model is to be successful. More research is needed to see if the perspectives among these groups, which are counter to much previous research, is the norm within the university service area and the region.

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